E. Iremonger

REMARKS

ON THE

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS

OF LEARNED AND EMINENT

LAYMEN.

(1) C. Ironmonger

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VIZ.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON,	NELSON,
HON. ROBERT BOYLE,	LORD LYTTELTON,
LOCKE,	WEST,
SIR MATTHEW HALE,	SOAME JENYNS,
ADDISON,	&c. &c.

WITH

OCCASIONAL REFLECTIONS ON INCREDULITY.

Jesus said, Wherefore didst thou doubt? Matt. xiv. 31.
And he marvelled because of their unbelief. Mark vi. 6.

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SOLD BY MESSRS. ROBINSONS, PATERNOSTER-ROW;
MESSRS. MERRIL, AND LUNN, CAMBRIDGE;
AND MESSRS. FLETCHER, OXFORD.

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Study the Holy Scripture, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has GOD *for its Author,* SALVATION *for its end, and* TRUTH, *without any mixture of error, for its matter.*

LOCKE.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD KENYON,

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND,

AS A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT

TO HIS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CHARACTER,

THESE

REMARKS

ON THE

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS

OF LEARNED AND EMINENT

LAYMEN

ARE HUMBLY INSCRIBED.

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PRELIMINARY

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

THE following ſentiments of learned and eminent LAYMEN on natural and revealed RELIGION, were collected by a clergyman in the dioceſe of London, who, having derived great pleaſure from them himſelf, wiſhes to communicate the ſame ſatisfaction to others.

As many of our modern Sceptics are great pretenders to reaſon and

philoſophy, and are willing to have it thought that none who are really poſſeſſed of thoſe talents, can aſſent to the truth of Chriſtianity—it may not be improper to ſhew the preſent age, that the moſt perfect reaſoners and philoſophers of their time, though Laymen, are known to have been firm believers in the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Thoſe, whoſe religious ſentiments are not perfectly eſtabliſhed, would do well to conſider the opinions of wiſer men, before they reſign themſelves "to an evil heart of UNBELIEF;" before they raſhly decide in a matter of ſuch moment, on their own ill-informed and weak judgments, they would do well to conſider the opinions of

of ſuch learned and eminent characters as, Sir Iſaac Newton, Mr. Locke, Mr. Boyle, &c. who, not being of the clerical order, cannot be ſuſpected of being improperly influenced on the ſubject which they write upon.

Theſe great names, or the teſtimonies they have given of their firm belief in the truth of Chriſtianity, are not brought forward as if the evidences of religion were to be finally reſolved into human authority, or tried in any other way, than by the known and eſtabliſhed rules of right reaſon; but the deſign in mentioning them is ——

To ſhew how very ill-founded the opinions of thoſe are, who would

make the belief of Revelation inconſiſtent with the due uſe of our reaſon; when they have known ſo many eminent inſtances of the greateſt maſters of reaſon, not only believing Revelation, but zealouſly concerned to eſtabliſh and propagate the belief of it.

The remembrance of this will alſo be a means, on one hand, to prevent well-meaning men from being miſled by the vain boaſts or falſe ſuggeſtions of any minute philoſopher, or pretender to reaſon; and, on the other hand, to check the inclination of the wicked and vicious to be miſled; when both of them have before their eyes ſuch great and eminent inſtances of ſound reaſoning, and a firm faith joined together in one and the ſame mind.

mind. For, as Lord Bacon obſerves in his Eſſays,—" A little philoſophy " inclineth men's minds to atheiſm; " but depth of philoſophy bringeth " men's minds about to religion."

Further, as the authors mentioned in the following pages were perſons generally eſteemed for their virtue and piety, as well as for their high attainments in learning and knowledge; their examples ſhew us, that a ſtrong and clear reaſon, with a good diſpoſition, will lead to the belief of Revelation. Of this we have an eminent inſtance in Mr. Locke, who ſays, " I grate- " fully receive and rejoice in the " light of Revelation, which hath " ſet me at reſt in many things; " the manner whereof my poor rea-

" ſon can by no means make out to " me."

Though the preceding declaration is ſo very expreſſive of Mr. Locke's humility, and diffidence of his own intellectual endowments, it can by no means imply that the celebrated author of the " Eſſay on Human Underſtanding" could be more defective in the powers of reaſon, than the ſceptical cavillers at Revelation.

The laſt and very material conſideration is, that as the perſons whoſe " religious ſentiments" are here collected were all LAYMEN, there is no room for the enemies of revealed religion to alledge, that they were prejudiced by intereſt, or ſecular conſider-

ations of any kind. How many are ready to fortify themſelves againſt every thing advanced by men of the clerical order, with that hacknied and illiberal remark, "that it is their trade, and that they are paid for it."—A ſuggeſtion that has really no weight when urged againſt the writings of the clergy in defence of Revelation, ſince they do not deſire to be truſted upon their own authority, but upon the reaſons which they offer. Lawyers and phyſicians are not leſs truſted becauſe they live by their profeſſions: but this is a ſuggeſtion that eaſily takes hold of weak minds, and ſuch as are willing to be caught by them. And conſidering the diligence of the adverſary, in making proſelytes and drawing men from the faith of Chriſt, equal dili-

gence is required of thoſe who are to maintain that faith, not only to leave men no real ground, but even no colour or pretence for their infidelity. "Therefore (as ST. PAUL, who, from a violent perſecutor, became an eminent convert to the Chriſtian religion, writes) "we ought to give the more "earneſt heed to the things which we "have heard, leſt at any time we "ſhould let them ſlip. For if the "word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, "and every tranſgreſſion and diſobe-"dience received a juſt recompenſe "of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, "if we neglect ſo great ſalvation? "which at the firſt began to be ſpoken "by the Lord, and was confirmed "unto us by them that heard him: "GOD alſo bearing them witneſs,

"both

" both with ſigns and wonders, and " with diverſe miracles and gifts of " the HOLY GHOST." Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

SECTION.

SECTION I.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON, who is univerſally acknowledged to be the ableſt philoſopher and mathematician that this, or, perhaps, any other nation has produced, is alſo well known to have been a firm believer, and a ſerious Chriſtian.

He * was born at Wolſtrop in Lincolnſhire, was educated at the free ſchool at Grantham, and entered at Trinity college, Cambridge, in 1660. He died 20th March, 1726-7, and was buried in Weſtminſter abbey, where

* Some biographical accounts of the authors are prefixed, in order to ſhew, that to great and eminent natural talents, were added the benefits of a learned and liberal education.

a very

a very handſome monument is erected to his memory with the following elegant inſcription:

H. S. E.
Iſaacus Newton, eques auratus,
Qui animi vi prope divina
Planetarum motus, figuras,
Cometarum, ſemitas, oceanique æſtus,
Sua Matheſi facem preferente
Primus demonſtravit.
Radiorum lucis diſſimilitudines
Colorumque inde naſcentium proprietates,
Quas nemo antea vel ſuſpicatus erat,
perveſtigavit.
Naturæ, antiquitatis, S. Scripturæ
Sedulus, ſagax, fidus interpres,
Dei Opt. Max. Mageſtatem philoſophia aſſeruit
Evangelii ſimplicitatem moribus expreſſit.
Sibi gratulentur mortales, tale tantumq; extitiſſe,
Humani generis decus.
Natus xxv. Decemb. 1622. Obiit xx. Mart. 1726.

Sir

Sir Iſaac Newton firmly adhered to the Church of England, and amongſt the variety of authors which he was continually reading, the book he had moſt conſtantly in his hands was the BIBLE. His great and wonderful diſcoveries concerning the frame and ſyſtem of the univerſe were applied by him, to demonſtrate againſt Atheiſts of all kinds, the Being of a GOD; and to illuſtrate his power and wiſdom in the creation of the world.

Sir Iſaac Newton has given us his thoughts concerning the Deity, at the end of his Mathematical Principles of Natural Philoſophy; wherein he firſt obſerves, that the ſimilitude found in all parts of the univerſe, makes it undoubted, that the whole is governed by

by one SUPREME BEING, to whom the original is owing of the frame of nature, which evidently is the effect of choice and deſign.

He then proceeds briefly to ſtate the beſt metaphyſical notions concerning GOD. In ſhort, we cannot conceive either of ſpace or time otherwiſe than as neceſſarily exiſting; therefore this Being, on whom all others depend, muſt certainly exiſt by the ſame neceſſity of nature. Conſequently, wherever ſpace and time is found, there GOD muſt alſo be. And as it appears impoſſible to us, that ſpace ſhould be limited, or that time ſhould have had a beginning, the DEITY muſt be immenſe and eternal.

This

This truly great and good man applied himſelf, with the utmoſt attention, to the ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures, and conſidered the ſeveral parts of them with uncommon exactneſs; particularly as to the order of time, and the ſeries of prophecies and events relating to the MESSIAH: upon which ſubject he left behind him an elaborate diſcourſe to prove, that the celebrated prophecy of Daniel's weeks was an expreſs prophecy of the coming of the Meſſiah, and that it was fulfilled in JESUS CHRIST.

SECTION II.

THE Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, that moſt exact obſerver of the works of Nature that any age has known, purſued his philoſophical inquiries with religious views; to eſtabliſh the minds of men in a firm belief of the infinite power and wiſdom of the great CREATOR.

This eminent philoſopher was the fourth ſon of Richard, the firſt Earl of Cork in Ireland. He was not more diſtinguiſhed by the nobility of his birth and family, than by his talents and great attainments in learning and knowledge; ſo that he was exempt from

from that reflection which the Roman Poet made on thoſe who valued themſelves only for the merits of their anceſtors, ſince he might truly ſay—

" Quod genus & attavi & quæ non fecimus ipſi,
Vix ea noſtra voco."——

This learned nobleman hath made it evident by his writings, that he was not only a great philoſopher, but alſo a good Chriſtian. His example, as well as that of Sir Iſaac Newton, ſufficiently prove, that philoſophy and divinity are not inconſiſtent with each other. For, as Mr. Boyle obſerves, " though it hath been thought ſtrange that an experimental philoſopher ſhould be a zealous Chriſtian," yet both by his own example and writings he hath made

made it evident, that experimental philoſophy affords peculiar advantages to a well diſpoſed mind towards making a good Chriſtian, and, by contemplating the works of *creation*, to raiſe a juſt eſteem and high veneration for the CREATOR *.

To ſhew how much philoſophy may contribute to promote theology, Mr. Boyle ſays in his theological works, that philoſophy furniſhes us with arguments to prove the exiſtence of a God; ſince the more a man knows,

* Biſhop Burnet ſays, that Mr. Boyle had the profoundeſt veneration for the great God of heaven and earth that ever he obſerved in any perſon—"the "very name of GOD was never mentioned by him "without a viſible *pauſe* in his diſcourſe."

he will be the better able to diſcover the excellencies of God's works; and as it is ſerviceable in proving the exiſtence of a God, ſo it aſſiſts us to evince the immortality of the ſoul, giving us diſtinct notions of body and mind, and the eſſential differences of their attributes. He repreſents farther, that the ſtudious ſearch of experimental truths accuſtoms a man to a ſerious and ſettled application of mind, which is requiſite to the clearing of thoſe notions and matters of fact on which ſolid arguments for natural and revealed religion are founded; whereas ſuperficial wits ſeek no further than the outſide of things, and are too ſoon tired with ſerious thoughts, quickly paſſing from one thing to another, without uſing

due

due attention to convince themſelves of their errors.

Having thus ſhewn how ſerviceable experimental philoſophy may be to religion in general, Mr. Boyle proceeds to ſhew how it may be ſerviceable to prove the truth of the Chriſtian religion; and, as the chief arguments of the truth of the Chriſtian religion are the excellency of its doctrine, the teſtimony of divine miracles, and the great effects produced in the world by it, having diſtinguiſhed experience into perſonal, hiſtorical, and ſupernatural, he proceeds to apply thoſe to recommend the credibility of the Chriſtian religion; ſhewing that ſeveral things ought to be believed, upon the information of experience, of each

of thoſe kinds which might otherwiſe be thought contrary to reaſon; and that we ought to have a peculiar regard to thoſe things that are recommended to our belief by ſupernatural experience, ſince we ought to give the higheſt degree of aſſent to what is taught by thoſe whom GOD hath commiſſioned to reveal his word.

He further ſhews the force of arguments drawn from miracles, and how far philoſophy aſſiſts us in judging of them; to which he ſubjoins the power and prerogative of reaſon in judging of thoſe things which are urged in defence of the Chriſtian religion or againſt it. Having thus ſhewn how a man may be both a good Chriſtian and a ſound philoſopher, and how much

the

the latter contributes to promote the former, he proceeds to prove that, in matters of faith, "Things may be "above reaſon without being againſt "it," in order to prevent groundleſs exceptions againſt the myſteries of the Chriſtian religion.

As the honourable Mr. Boyle made divinity his early ſtudy, ſo he endeavoured to recommend it to others. To ſhew mankind the value of the ſacred writings, the better to engage them in the ſtudy of it, and to take off thoſe imputations which have been ſo prejudicial, he wrote an excellent "Treatiſe in Defence of the Style of the Scriptures," wherein he learnedly examined and anſwered all thoſe objections which irreligious and profane perſons

have made againſt it. In this it appears how converſant the author was in the holy ſcriptures, and how much he had ſtudied them. This treatiſe is not only a ſpecimen of his knowledge in the Oriental languages, and of the pains he took to ſtudy the ſcriptures, but it alſo contains the beſt motives and conſiderations to perſuade others to ſtudy it. He farther repreſents the danger of burleſquing and profaning the word of God; which ſhews what a profound veneration he had for thoſe writings, proving themſelves, by their doctrine, to be of divine origin.

Mr. Boyle ſhews us, in his "Treatiſe on the Veneration due to God," what great reaſons we have to admire, venerate, and adore, that Being, ſo infinitely wiſe,

wiſe, powerful, and good. He not only repreſents the divine attributes and excellencies as motives to adoration, but, as a further reaſon of admitting the infinite perfections of God, he repreſents the narrowneſs of our intellects and the limited bounds of our capacities; ſhewing how vaſtly diſtant infinite is from finite, and that the ſmall and ſuperficial knowledge of theſe things, which we know, is far ſhort of the knowledge which none but Infinite Wiſdom can underſtand.

Since the vanity of man, though of ſo narrow and limited a capacity, often leads him to think himſelf ſo wiſe as to be able to underſtand every thing, and too frequently to judge that thoſe things which are above his capacity

are beneath it, or to think that whatever does not quadrate with his reaſon, muſt be contrary to reaſon—It was to convince mankind of ſo groſs an error, Mr. Boyle wrote the "Treatiſe concerning Things above Reaſon," wherein he makes it appear that ſeveral things, which we judge to be *contrary* to reaſon, becauſe they are *above* our comprehenſion, are not, on that account, to be thought unreaſonable, ſince they may appear reaſonable to a greater and more comprehenſive underſtanding. Thus men know more than children, and men of learning ſee the reaſon of things which illiterate perſons either do not underſtand, or which they conſider as erroneous, becauſe not agreeable to thoſe thoughts and knowledge by which they form their judgment. Therefore as infinite

infinite underſtanding is above finite, ſo what may appear inconſiſtent with human reaſon, may be perfectly conſiſtent with divine wiſdom.

In his "Treatiſe on the Reconcileableneſs of Reaſon and Religion," Mr. Boyle writes "though it be a miſtake amongſt many, to think that to embrace our religion we muſt renounce our reaſon, and that to be a Chriſtian one muſt ceaſe to be a man; and, what is more, forſake being a philoſopher;" yet I muſt make this negative anſwer—"that I do not think that a Chriſtian, to be truly ſo, is obliged to forego his reaſon, either by denying the dictates of right reaſon, or by laying aſide the uſe of it."

The following account of Mr. Boyle we have from Biſhop Burnet, who was intimately acquainted with him — "It appeared to thoſe who converſed with him, that the main deſign of his inquiries into nature was, to raiſe in himſelf and others vaſter thoughts of the greatneſs and glory, and of the wiſdom and goodneſs of GOD." This conſideration was ſo impreſſed on his mind, that he concludes the article of his will which relates to that illuſtrious body the Royal Society, in theſe words — "wiſhing them a happy ſucceſs in their laudable attempts to diſcover the true nature of the works of GOD; and praying that they and all other ſearchers into phyſical truths, may cordially refer their attainments to the glory of the great

great Author of nature and to the comfort of mankind."

To confute the pernicious principle of aſcribing effects to Nature, which are only produced by the infinite power and wiſdom of God, Mr. Boyle wrote his "Free Enquiry into the received Notion of Nature;" and alſo his "Eſſay about Final Cauſes of Natural Things," to ſhew that all things in nature were made and contrived with great order, and every thing for its proper end and uſes, by an all-wiſe Creator.

He had ſtudied the *Works* of God ſo well, and was alſo ſo intimately acquainted with his *Word*, that every thing tended to make him the better man as it improved his knowledge, and the better

better Chriſtian, as he made a pious uſe of it. Even philoſophy taught him divinity; and he made uſe of it to inſtruct others the ſame way. To this end he wrote what is called "The Chriſtian Virtuoſo;" in which he ſhews that the want only of a pious diſpoſition inclines thoſe that ſtudy philoſophy, without any due knowledge in divinity, to convert it to an ill uſe; whereas thoſe that are firſt well inſtituted in ſacred things, eaſily diſcover a God in all his works.

Speaking of morality conſidered as a rule of life, Mr. Boyle ſays "I have formerly taken pains to peruſe books of morality, yet, ſince they have only a power to perſuade, but not to command, and ſin and death do not neceſ-

ſarily

ſarily attend the diſobedience of them, they have the leſs influence; for, ſince we may take the liberty to queſtion human writers, I find that the methods they take to impoſe their writings upon us, may ſerve to countenance either truth or falſehood."

His zeal to propagate Chriſtianity in the world appears by many and large benefactions to that end. He was at the charge of the tranſlation and impreſſion of the New Teſtament into the Malay language, which he ſent to the Eaſt Indies. He gave a conſiderable reward to the tranſlator of Grotius's "Truth of the Chriſtian Religion" into Arabic, and was at the charge of the whole impreſſion, which he diſtributed in all the countries where

where that language is underſtood. He had determined on an impreſſion of the New Teſtament into the Turkiſh language, but the company thought it became them to undertake it, to which, however, he largely contributed. He was at the charge of ſeven hundred pounds in the edition of the Iriſh Bible, which he ordered to be diſtributed in Ireland; and he was a conſiderable contributor to the impreſſion of the Welſh Bible. He alſo ſubſcribed three hundred pounds towards advancing the deſign of propagating the Chriſtian religion in America; and as ſoon as he heard that the India Company were entertaining propoſitions for the like deſign in the Eaſt, he ſent an hundred pound for a beginning and an example, but intended

intended to carry it much further when the plan was eſtabliſhed.— "This glory of our nation and age, whoſe charity and goodneſs were as univerſal as his learning and fame," (as Dr. Bentley juſtly obſerves) ordered, by will, that a liberal annual proviſion ſhould be made for a miniſter to preach a certain number of diſcourſes on the Truth of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION. In his younger years he had thoughts of entering into holy orders; but one reaſon that determined him againſt it was, that he believed he might, in ſome reſpects, be more ſerviceable to religion by continuing a layman. His having no intereſts, with reſpect to religion, beſides thoſe of a good Chriſtian, gave him, as he thought, a more unſuſpected authority

in

in writing or acting on that ſide: he therefore hoped that he might have the more influence on the minds of men, the leſs he ſhared in the benefits of the Church.

Such was the ſtrictneſs and exemplarineſs of Mr. Boyle's life through the whole courſe of it, that Biſhop Burnet ſays "I might challenge the whole tribe of libertines to come and view the uſefulneſs as well as the excellency of the Chriſtian religion in a life that was entirely dedicated to it."

SECTION.

SECTION III.

MR. LOCKE, whoſe accurate talent in reaſoning is ſo much celebrated even by the ſceptics and infidels of our times, ſufficiently proved his zeal for the Chriſtian religion, by publiſhing a diſcourſe expreſsly written to demonſtrate "the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity as delivered in the ſcriptures."

This celebrated author was educated at Weſtminſter ſchool, and afterwards became a ſtudent at Chriſt church, Oxford, where he took his degrees in 1655 and 1658. He firſt entered on the phyſic line, and went through the uſual courſes preparatory to practice; but his conſtitution not being able to bear much fatigue, he embraced an

offer made to him of going abroad in quality of Secretary to Sir William Swan, Envoy to the Elector of Bradenburg.

He paſſed the laſt ten years of his life at Oates, near Chipping Ongar, in Eſſex, died in 1704, aged 72, and was buried in High Laver; the following is part of the Epitaph inſcribed over his tomb:

Siſte, Viator,
Hic juxta ſitus eſt
JOHANNES LOCKE.
Si qualis fuerit, rogas.
Mediocritate ſua contentum
Se vixiſſe reſpondet;
Litteris innutritus eoſque tantum profuit
Ut VERITATI unice litaret.
Hoc, ex Scriptis illius, diſces
Quæ quod de eo reliquum eſt
Majori fide tibi exhibebunt
Quam *epitaphii* ſuſpecta Elogia.

Mr.

Mr. Locke ſhews the reaſonableneſs of believing JESUS CHRIST to be the promiſed Meſſiah from prophecy, miracles, and doctrine. Next to the knowledge of their GOD, a clear knowledge of their duty was wanting to mankind. This part of knowledge, though cultivated with ſome care by ſome of the Heathen philoſophers, yet got little ground among the people. The deſigning leaders, as well as the following herd, Mr. Locke obſerves, did not find it to their purpoſe to employ much of their meditations in this way. Whatever was the cauſe, it is plain in fact, that human reaſon, unaſſiſted, failed men in its great and proper buſineſs of morality; and he that ſhall collect all the moral rules of the ancient philoſophers, and compare them

with thoſe contained in the New Teſtament, will find them to come infinitely ſhort of the morality delivered by our Saviour, and taught by his Apoſtles. Mr. Locke ſpeaks of the miracles wrought by our Saviour in the ſtrongeſt manner, both as facts unexceptionably true, and as the cleareſt evidences of a divine miſſion. His words and ſentiments on the ſubject are as follow:

"The evidence of our Saviour's miſſion from heaven is ſo great, in the multitude of miracles he did, before all ſorts of people, (which the divine providence and wiſdom has ſo ordered, that they never were, nor could be, denied by any of the enemies and oppoſers of Chriſtianity), that what he delivered, cannot but be received as the oracles of GOD."

Mr. Locke remarks in another place, that, "after our Lord's reſurrection, he ſent his apoſtles amongſt the nations, accompanied with miracles; which were done in all parts ſo frequently, and before ſo many witneſſes of all ſorts, that, as I have often obſerved, (ſays Mr. Locke) the enemies of Chriſtianity have never dared to deny them. No, not Julian himſelf, who neither wanted ſkill nor power to inquire into the truth, nor would have failed to have proclaimed and expoſed it, if he could have detected any thing falſe in the hiſtory of the Goſpel, or found the leaſt ground to queſtion the matter of fact publiſhed by CHRIST and his apoſtles. The number and evidence of the miracles done by our Saviour and his followers, by the power and force of truth, bore down this

mighty and accompliſhed emperor in his own dominions. He durſt not deny ſo plain a matter of fact; which being granted, the truth of our Saviour's doctrine and miſſion unavoidably follows, notwithſtanding the artful ſuggeſtions his wit could invent, or his malice offer, againſt it."

To thoſe who aſk, "What need was there of a Saviour?—What advantage have we by JESUS CHRIST?" Mr. Locke replies as follows:—— "It is enough to juſtify the fitneſs of any thing to be done, by reſolving it into the wiſdom of GOD, who has done it; whereof our narrow underſtandings and ſhort views may utterly incapacitate us to judge. We know but little of this viſible, and nothing at

at all of the ſtate of that intellectual world, wherein are infinite numbers and degrees of ſpirits. We know not what need there was to ſet up a HEAD and a CHIEFTAIN, in oppoſition to "the Prince of this world, the Prince of the power of the air," whereof there are more than obſcure intimations in ſcripture. We ſhall take too much upon us, if we call GOD's wiſdom and providence to account, and pertly condemn for needleſs, all that our weak underſtanding cannot account for." Mr. Locke then proceeds to ſhew at large, the neceſſity there was of a goſpel revelation, to deliver the world from the miſerable ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance that mankind were in: 1ſt, As to the true knowledge of God:—2dly, As to the worſhip to be

paid to him:—3dly, As to the duties to be performed to him. To which he adds the great aids and encouragements to the performance of our duty, from the aſſurance the Goſpel gives of future rewards and puniſhments, and from the promiſe of the Spirit of GOD to direct and aſſiſt us."

It muſt not be unobſerved, that the holy ſcriptures are every where mentioned by Mr. Locke with the greateſt reſpect and reverence. He calls them the HOLY BOOKS, the SACRED TEXT, the DIVINE REVELATION; and exhorts Chriſtians "to betake themſelves in earneſt to the ſtudy of the way to ſalvation in theſe holy writings, wherein God has revealed it from heaven, and propoſed it to the world; ſeeking

ſeeking our religion, where we are ſure it is in truth to be found, comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual."

In a letter written by Mr. Locke, a year before his death, in anſwer to the following queſtion, "What is the ſhorteſt and ſureſt way for a young Gentleman to attain to a true knowledge of the Chriſtian religion, in the full and juſt extent of it?" he replies, "Let him ſtudy the HOLY SCRIPTURE, eſpecially the New Teſtament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life—It has GOD for its author, SALVATION for its end, and TRUTH, without any mixture of error, for its matter *.

* Poſthhumous Works, p. 344.

It

It is recorded in his poſthumous works " that for fourteen or fifteen years he applied himſelf to the ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures, and employed the laſt years of his life hardly in any thing elſe. He was never weary of admiring the great views of that SACRED BOOK, and the juſt relation of all its parts. He every day made diſcoveries in it that gave him freſh cauſe of admiration."

Of St. PAUL in particular, upon ſeveral of whoſe Epiſtles Mr. Locke drew up a moſt uſeful commentary, he ſays, " that he was miraculouſly called to the miniſtry of the goſpel, and declared to be a choſen veſſel— that he had the whole doctrine of the goſpel from GOD by immediate revelation

lation—that for his information in the Chriſtian knowledge, and the myſteries and depths of the diſpenſation of God by JESUS CHRIST, GOD himſelf had condeſcended to be his inſtructor and teacher—that he had received the light of the goſpel from the Fountain and Father of Light *."

The death of this great man was agreeable to his life—for we are informed, by one who was with Mr. Locke when he died, and had lived in the ſame family for ſeven years before—" that the day before his death he very particularly exhorted all about him to read the Holy Scriptures"—" that he deſired to be remembered by them at evening prayers; and being

* Comment. p. 16.

told

told that, if he would, the whole family ſhould come and pray by him in his chamber, he anſwered he ſhould be very glad to have it ſo, if it would not give too much trouble—that an occaſion offering to ſpeak of the goodneſs of GOD"—" he eſpecially exalted the love which God ſhewed to man, in juſtifying him by faith in Jeſus Chriſt; and returned God thanks in particular, for having called him to the knowledge of that DIVINE SAVIOUR."

SECTION IV.

SIR MATTHEW HALE, Lord Chief Juſtice of England is juſtly entitled to a place among thoſe learned and eminent Laymen who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the cauſe of RELIGION.

He was born at Alderley in Glouceſterſhire*. It is ſaid that his father was a man of that ſtrictneſs of conſcience as to retire from the practice of the law, "becauſe he could not underſtand the reaſon of giving colour in pleadings, which, as he thought, was to tell a lie;

* The reaſon of prefixing ſome biographical account of each author is given in the note, Page 10, Section I.

and

and that, with ſome other things commonly practiſed, ſeemed to him contrary to that exactneſs of truth and juſtice which became a Chriſtian."

Sir Matthew Hale was deſcended rather from a good than from a noble family, and yet what was wanting in the inſignificant titles of High Birth was more than recompenſed in the true worth of his anceſtors. Great attention was paid to his education; when he was ſeventeen he was entered at Magdalen Hall, in Oxford; and in the twentieth year of his age was admitted of Lincolns Inn.

An anecdote is related of him, that, in his younger days, he was rather given to company and diſſipation. But this propenſity was corrected by a circumſtance

ſtance that made a conſiderable impreſſion on his mind during the reſt of his life. Being one day in company with other ſtudents, one of the party, through exceſs of wine, fell down (apparently) dead at their feet. Mr. Hale was ſo affected at this circumſtance, that he immediately retired to another room, and, ſhutting the door, fell on his knees, and prayed earneſtly to God that his friend might be reſtored to life, and that he himſelf might be forgiven, for giving countenance to ſo much exceſs. At the ſame time he made a ſolemn vow that he would never again keep company in that manner, nor "drink a health" while he lived. His friend recovered, and he moſt religiouſly obſerved his vow to the day of his death.

This

This circumſtance wrought ſo entire a change in his diſpoſition, that he forſook all diſſipated company, and divided himſelf between the duties of religion and the ſtudies of his profeſſion. In the former he was ſo regular, that, for ſix and thirty years, he never once failed going to church on the Lord's day; and, in the latter, it is ſaid, that he ſtudied ſixteen hours a day for many years. He often ſaid, "that when he was weary with the ſtudy of the law, he uſed to recreate himſelf with philoſophy or the mathematics;" to which he added conſiderable knowledge in phyſic and chirurgery, obſerving that "no man could be abſolutely a maſter in any profeſſion, without having ſome ſkill in other ſciences.

He

He was raiſed to the bench, and made one of the Judges of the Common Pleas in the time of Oliver Cromwell. He lived a private man until the parliament met which reſtored the King, and in which he ſat as Member for the county of Glouceſter.

Soon after this, when the courts of law came to be ſettled, he was made Lord Chief Baron. When the Earl of Clarendon (then Lord Chancellor) delivered him his commiſſion, in the ſpeech his Lordſhip made on that occaſion, he expreſſed his eſteem for him in a very ſingular manner, ſaying, among other things, " that if the King could have found an honeſter and fitter man for that employment,

he would not have advanced him to it, and that he therefore preferred him, becauſe he knew none that deſerved it ſo well."

But ſuch an opinion of Sir Matthew Hale will not appear extraordinary when we conſider thoſe excellent rules which he ſet himſelf, and which are copied from the original in his own hand:

I. That in the adminiſtration of juſtice, I am entruſted for God, the King, and Country.

II. That it be done uprightly, deliberately, reſolutely.

III. That I reſt not upon my own underſtanding

derſtanding or ſtrength, but implore and reſt upon the direction and ſtrength of God.

IV. That in the execution of juſtice, I carefully lay aſide my own paſſions, and not give way to them, however provoked.

V. That I be wholly intent upon the buſineſs I am about, remitting all other cares and thoughts, as unſeaſonable and interruptions.

VI. That I ſuffer not myſelf to be prepoſſeſſed with any judgment at all, until the whole buſineſs and both parties be heard.

VII. That I never engage myſelf in the beginning of any cauſe, but re-

ſerve myſelf unprejudiced till the whole be heard.

VIII. That in buſineſs capital, though my nature prompt me to pity; yet to conſider that there is alſo a pity due to my country.

There are ten other rules, but theſe will give the reader an idea of the author's method of conducting public buſineſs.

Sir Matthew Hale was promoted in 1671 to be Lord Chief Juſtice of England, where he paſſed the reſt of his public life and employment. He had not been five years in this ſituation before his conſtitution, which had hitherto been ſtrong and vigorous, to which his great temperance did not a little conduce,

conduce, began to decline. This determined him to reſign the office of Lord Chief Juſtice, which he did in February 1676, and died in December following at Alderley in Glouceſterſhire, the place of his nativity, where he was buried among his anceſtors, and the following inſcription, by his own deſire, put upon his tomb:

Hic inhumatur corpus
Matthei Hale, militis;
Roberti Hale et Joannæ uxoris ejus,
Filii unici.
Nati in hac parochia de Alderley,
Primo die Novembris, anno Dom. 1609.
Denati vero ibidem,
Viceſimo quinto die Decembris,
Anno Domini, 1676.
Ætatis ſuæ 67.

Though his humility forbid any other epitaph to be inſcribed in memorial of him, yet the following teſtimonial by Biſhop Burnet muſt be acknowledged highly expreſſive of his character.

THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST PATTERNS OF THE AGE HE LIVED IN, WHETHER IN HIS PRIVATE DEPORTMENT AS A CHRISTIAN, OR IN HIS PUBLIC EMPLOYMENTS, EITHER AT THE BAR OR ON THE BENCH *.

* While we pay every due reſpect to the memory of a former Chief Juſtice of England, let us not be inſenſible to the merits of the noble Lord who ſo honourably fills that department at preſent, whoſe private character and great profeſſional knowledge demand our admiration; and who, in his judicial capacity, has ſhewn himſelf ſuch a friend to virtue, and ſuch an enemy to every thing of an immoral tendency, as to be juſtly called the CUSTOS MORUM of the preſent age.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

PART II.

Sir Matthew Hale's piety and zeal for religion are highly conſpicuous in his writings. He ſeemed to have made the ſtudy of divinity a principal object, in which he attained ſuch excellence, that thoſe who have read what he has written on this ſubject, will ſuppoſe that it muſt have engaged moſt of his time and attention through life; moſt of his religious tracts were written upon this occaſion: "It had been his practice for many years, every Lord's day in the afternoon, to employ his thoughts upon

ſeveral ſubjects of divine contemplations, which he put into writing."—This he did without any intention of publiſhing, but merely to fix his thoughts, and impreſs them on his memory.

His moral and divine contemplations have been printed, and conſiſt of "Conſiderations on our latter End—On the Wiſdom and Fear of God—On the Knowledge of Chriſt crucified—On Faith—On Humility—On Afflictions—On Redeeming the Time," &c. &c. Another volume contains—"An Enquiry touching Happineſs—On the Chief End of Man—The Folly and Miſchief of Sin—On Self-denial—On Content and Patience—On Submiſſion, Prayer, and Thankſgiving—Meditations

tions on the Lord's Prayer," &c. &c. Among thoſe manuſcripts by Sir Matthew Hale, which have not been printed, are five volumes folio, entirely relating to religious ſubjects. Many of his tracts were printed without his knowledge, and therefore not being reviſed by the author, they appear in their native and original ſimplicity.

His piety and purity of heart are highly diſplayed in his letters to his children, from one of which the following is extracted:

DEAR CHILDREN,

"I intended to have been at Alderley this Whitſuntide, deſirous to renew thoſe counſels and advices which I have often given you, in order to your

your greateſt concernment; namely, the everlaſting good and welfare of your ſouls hereafter, and the due ordering of your lives and converſations here."

" Although young people are apt, through their own indiſcretion, or the ill advice of others, to think theſe kind of entertainments but dry and empty matters, and the moroſe and needleſs interpoſitions of old men; yet give him leave to tell you, that very well knows what he ſays, theſe things are of more importance and concernment to you, than external gifts and bounties; wherein, nevertheleſs, I have not been wanting to you, according to my ability.

" This

" This was my intention in this journey; and though I have been diſappointed therein, yet I thought good, by letters and meſſages, to do ſomething that might be done that way for your benefit, that I had otherwiſe intended to have done in perſon.

" Aſſure yourſelves therefore, and believe it from one that knows what he ſays, from one that neither can have any reaſon or end to deceive you, that the beſt gift I can give you, is, good counſel; and the beſt counſel I can give you is, that which relates to your greateſt import and concernment;—namely, RELIGION.

" Therefore, ſince I cannot at this time, deliver it to you in perſon, I ſhall

ſhall do it by this letter; and by your due obſervance of theſe directions, I ſhall have a good character both of your dutifulneſs to God and of your obedience to your father; for it is moſt certain, that as religion is the beſt means to advance and rectify human nature, ſo no man ſhall be truly wiſe or truly happy without it and the love of it; no, not in this life, much leſs in that which is to come.

" Therefore, every morning and every evening, upon your knees, humbly commend yourſelves to Almighty God in prayer, begging his mercy to pardon your ſins, his grace to direct you, his providence to protect you; returning him humble thanks for all his diſpenſations towards you,—yea,

even

even for his very corrections and afflictions; intreating him to give you wiſdom and grace to make a ſober, patient, humble, profitable uſe of them, and in his due time to deliver you from them; concluding your prayers with the Lord's prayer. This will be a certain means to bring your mind to a right frame; to procure you comfort and bleſſing, and to prevent thouſands of inconveniences and miſchiefs, to which you will be otherwiſe ſubjected.

" Every morning read ſeriouſly and reverently a portion of the holy ſcripture, and acquaint yourſelf with the hiſtory and doctrine thereof. It is a book full of light and wiſdom, ' will ' make you wiſe to eternal ſalvation,' and

and will furniſh you with directions and principles to guide and order your life ſafely and prudently. Conclude every evening with reading ſome part of the ſcripture and prayer in your family.

" Be ſtrict and religious Obſervers of the Lord's day; reſort to your pariſh church twice that day, if your health will permit, and attend diligently and reverently to the public prayers and ſermons. He cannot reaſonably expect a bleſſing from God, the reſt of the week, that neglects his duty to God in the due conſecration of this day to the ſpecial ſervice and duty of God, which this day requires.

" Receive the ſacrament, at leaſt, three

three times a year, and oftener, as there is occaſion, in your pariſh church. The laws of the land require this, and the law of your Saviour requires it, and the law of duty and gratitude requires it of you. Prepare yourſelves ſeriouſly for this ſervice beforehand, and perform it with reverence and thankfulneſs. The neglect of this duty procures great inconvenience, and commonly the neglect hereof ariſeth from ſome conceited opinion that people inconſiderately take up; but moſt ordinarily from a ſluggiſhneſs of mind, and an unwillingneſs to fit and prepare the mind for it; or to leave ſome ſinful or vain courſe, that men are not willing to leave, and yet condemn themſelves in the practice of it.

" Beware of thoſe that go about to ſeduce you from that religion wherein you have been brought up—namely, the true Proteſtant religion. It is not unknown to any that obſerves the ſtate of things in the world, how many erroneous religions are ſcattered abroad, and how induſtrious men, of falſe perſuaſions, are to make proſelytes. They will endeavour to withdraw people from the public miniſtry of God's word; encourage men to ſlight and neglect it; and when they have once effected this, they have a fair opportunity to infuſe their own corrupt principles.

" Send your children early to learn their catechiſm, that they may take in the true principles of religion betimes, which

which may grow up with them, and habituate them both to the knowledge and the practice of it; that they may eſcape the danger of corruption by error or vice, being antecedently ſeaſoned with better principles.

" Receive the bleſſings of God with very much thankfulneſs to him; for he is the root and fountain of all the good you do, or can receive. Bear all afflictions patiently; it is your duty, for " afflictions come not from the duſt." The great God of heaven and earth is he that ſends theſe meſſengers to you, though poſſibly evil occurrences may be the immediate inſtruments of them. You owe to Almighty God an infinite ſubjection and obedience; and to expoſtulate with him is rebellion.

As it is your duty, ſo it is your wiſdom and your prudence. Impatience will not diſcharge your yoke, but will make it gall the worſe, and ſit the harder.

" Learn not only patience under your afflictions, but alſo profitably to improve them to your ſoul's good. Learn by them how vain and unprofitable things the world and the pleaſures thereof are, that a ſharp or a lingering ſickneſs renders utterly taſteleſs. Learn how vain and weak a thing human nature is, which is pulled down to the gates of death, and clothed with rottenneſs and corruption, by a little diſorder in the blood, in a nerve, in a vain, in an artery. Since we have ſo little hold of a temporal life, which is ſhaken and ſhattered by any ſmall

occurrence, accident, or diſtemper, learn to lay hold of eternal life, and of that covenant of peace and ſalvation, which Chriſt hath bought for all that believe and obey the goſpel of peace and ſalvation. There ſhall be no death, no ſickneſs, no pain, no weakneſs; but a ſtate of unchangeable and everlaſting happineſs.

" If you thus improve affliction, you are gainers by it; and moſt certain it is, that there is no more probable way, under the heaven, to be delivered from affliction, if the wiſe GOD ſee it fit, than thus to improve it. For affliction is a meſſenger, and the rod hath a voice; and that is, to require mankind to be the more patient, and the more humble, and the more to ac-

knowledge Almighty God in all our ways. If men liſten to this voice of the rod, and conform to it, the rod hath done his errand; and will either leave a man, or at leaſt give a man, ſingular comfort, even under the ſharpeſt affliction; and this 'affliction, which is but for a moment, (thus improved,) will work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' 2 Cor. iv. 17.

" And now I have written this long epiſtle to you, to perform that office for me that I ſhould have done in perſon, if I could have taken this journey. The epiſtle is long, but it had been longer, if I had had more time. And although perchance ſome there be in the world that, when they hear of it, will interpret it to be but the

the excurſions and moroſe rules of old age; yet I am perſuaded it will have better acceptation of you that are my Children.

" I am now on the ſhady ſide of threeſcore years; I write to you what you have often heard me in ſubſtance ſpeak; and poſſibly, when I ſhall leave this world, you will want ſuch a remembrancer as I have been to you.

" The words that I now and at former times have written to you, are words of truth and ſoberneſs; and words and advices that proceed from a heart full of love and affection to you all. If I ſhould ſee you do amiſs in any thing, and ſhould not reprove you; or if I ſhould find you wanting coun-

ſel and direction, and ſhould not give it, I ſhould not perform the truſt of a father; and if you ſhould not thankfully receive it, you would be ſomewhat defective in the duty you owe to God and me as Children.

" As I have never ſpared my purſe to ſupply you according to my abilities and the reaſonableneſs of occaſions, ſo I have never been wanting to you in good and prudent counſels. May the God of heaven give you wiſdom, conſtancy, and fidelity, in the obſervance of them! I am

Your ever loving father,

MATTHEW HALE.

Such a ſpirit of piety and benevolence pervades every ſentence of this letter from Judge Hale to his Children, that it is ſcarcely poſſible to read it with attention without being affected by it.

Under this impreſſion the Editor humbly thinks it would be a proper addition to thoſe ſmall tracts publiſhed by "the Society for Promoting Chriſtian Knowledge". A ſingle page, written by a Layman, has, upon ſome minds, a greater influence than a volume written by a Clergyman.

It is worthy of remark that one of the moſt ſucceſsful Treatiſes on Practical Piety is that entitled "The Great Importance of a Religious Life", written by a counſellor of law. This indeed

is a very excellent treatiſe, to which is prefixed the following account of the author by his ſon Mr. Melmoth, author of thoſe elegant letters, under the name Fitzoſborne.

" It may add weight perhaps to the reflections contained in the following pages, to inform the reader, that the author's life was one uniform exemplar of thoſe precepts, which, with ſo generous a zeal, and ſuch an elegant and affecting ſimplicity of ſtyle, he endeavours to recommend to general practice. He left others to contend for modes of faith and inflame themſelves and the world with endleſs controverſy: it was the wiſer purpoſe of his more ennobled aim, to act up to thoſe clear rules of conduct which revelation hath graciouſly preſcribed.

He

He poſſeſſed by temper every moral virtue; by Religion every Chriſtian Grace. He exerciſed his profeſſion with a ſkill and integrity, which nothing could equal but the diſintereſted motive that animated his labours, or the amiable modeſty which accompanied all his virtues. In a word, few have ever paſſed a more uſeful, not one a more blameleſs life; and his whole time was employed either in doing good, or in meditating it.

He died on the 6th of April 1743, and lies buried under the cloiſter of Lincoln's-Inn chapel."

SECTION V.

JOSEPH ADDISON, Eſq. one of the principal ſecretaries of ſtate in the Reign of King George I. but who derived leſs dignity from his public office and ſituation in life than from his private character and moral writings, was born in 1672, at Ambreſbury, in Wiltſhire. He received the firſt rudiments of his education at the place of his nativity, afterwards went to Saliſbury, from thence was removed to the Charter-Houſe, and, at fifteen years of age, he was entered at Queen's College, Oxford. This ornament of his time

time died at the age of 48, in the year 1719.*

That Mr. Addiſon believed the truth of the Chriſtian religion cannot be denied: the evidences he publiſhed to prove it, and his numerous obſervations on the ſubject of the divine Revelation, ſufficiently indicate the ſincerity of his belief. That he was deſervedly celebrated for an uncommon accuracy in thinking and reaſoning, and for his zeal againſt infidels of all kinds, his writings abundantly teſtify.

" As nothing, ſays he, is more laudable than an inquiry after TRUTH,

* " He taught us how to live, and, O too high
The price of knowledge, taught us how to die."
ELEGY on his DEATH.

ſo

ſo nothing is more irrational than to paſs away our whole lives without determining ourſelves one way or other in thoſe points which are of the laſt importance to us. There are indeed many things from which we may withhold our aſſent; but in caſes by which we are to regulate our lives, it is the greateſt abſurdity to be wavering and unſettled, without cloſing with that ſide which appears moſt ſafe and probable.

The firſt rule therefore which Mr. Addiſon lays down is this, that when by reading or diſcourſe we find ourſelves thoroughly convinced of the truth of any article, and of the reaſonableneſs of our belief in it, we ſhould never after ſuffer ourſelves to call it into

into queſtion. We may perhaps forget the arguments which occaſioned our conviction, but we ought to remember the ſtrength they had with us, and therefore ſtill to retain the conviction which they once produced. This is no more than what we do in every common art or ſcience; nor is it poſſible to act otherwiſe, conſidering the weakneſs and limitation of our intellectual faculties. It is in this manner that the Mathematician proceeds upon propoſitions which he has once demonſtrated; and though the demonſtration may have ſlipped out of his memory he builds upon the truth, becauſe he knows it was demonſtrated. This rule is abſolutely neceſſary for weaker minds, and in ſome meaſure for men of the greateſt abilities. But to theſe I would propoſe

poſe, that they ſhould lay up in their memories, and always keep by them in readineſs, thoſe arguments which appear to them of the greateſt ſtrength, and which cannot be got over by all the doubts and cavils of infidelity.

But, in the next place, there is nothing which ſtrengthens faith more than morality. Faith and Morality naturally produce each other. A man is quickly convinced of the truth of religion, who finds it is not againſt his intereſt that it ſhould be true. The pleaſure he receives at preſent and the happineſs which he promiſes himſelf from it hereafter, will both diſpoſe him very powerfully to give credit to it, according to the ordinary obſervations that " we are eaſy to believe what we wiſh

wiſh to be true." It is very certain that a man of ſound reaſon cannot forbear cloſing with religion upon an impartial examination of it; but at the ſame time it is as certain, that faith is kept alive in us, and gathers ſtrength from practice more than from ſpeculation.

There is ſtill another method which is more perſuaſive than any of the former, and that is an habitual adoration of the ſupreme Being, as well in conſtant acts of mental worſhip, as in outward forms. The devout man does not only believe but feels a Deity. He has actual ſenſations of him; his experience concurs with his reaſon; he ſees him more and more in all his intercourſes with him, and even in this

this life, almoſt loſes his faith in conviction.

" The laſt method which I ſhall mention," ſays Mr. Addiſon, " for the giving life to a man's faith, is frequent retirement from the world, accompanied with religious meditations. When a man thinks of any thing in the darkneſs of the night, whatever deep impreſſions it may make on his mind, they are apt to vaniſh as the day breaks upon him. The light and noiſe of the day, which are perpetually ſoliciting the ſenſes, and calling off his attention, wear out of his mind the thoughts that imprinted themſelves in it, with ſo much ſtrength, during the ſilence and darkneſs of the night.

" A man

A man finds the ſame difference as to himſelf in a crowd, and in a ſolitude. The mind is ſtunned and dazzled amidſt that variety of objects which preſs upon her in a great city. She cannot apply herſelf to the conſideration of thoſe things which are of the utmoſt concern to her. The cares or pleaſures of the world ſtrike in with every thought, and a multitude of vicious examples give a kind of juſtification to our folly. In our retirements every thing diſpoſes us to be ſerious. In courts and cities we are entertained with the works of man; in the country with thoſe of God. One is the province of art, the other of nature. Faith and devotion naturally grow in the mind of every reaſonable man who ſees the impreſſion of divine power

and wiſdom in every object on which he caſts his eye.

The Supreme Being (Mr. Addiſon obſerves) has made the beſt arguments for his own exiſtence, in the formation of the heavens and the earth, and theſe are arguments which a man of ſenſe cannot forbear attending to, who is out of the noiſe and hurry of human affairs. Ariſtotle ſays, that ſhould a man live under ground, and there converſe with works of art and mechaniſm, and ſhould afterwards be brought up into the open day, and ſee the ſeveral glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of ſuch a being as we define God to be. The Pſalmiſt has very beautiful ſtrokes of poetry

poetry to this purpoſe, in that exalted ſtrain:—' The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy work. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another. There is neither ſpeech nor language; but their voices are heard among them. Their ſound is gone out into all lands; and their words into the ends of the world*."

In another part of Mr. Addiſon's works we find the following obſervations on Incredulity.

A believer may be excuſed by the moſt hardened atheiſt for endeavour-

* This paſſage Mr. Addiſon paraphraſed in that admired Ode—

" The Spacious Firmament on High."

ing to make him a convert, becauſe he does it with an eye to both their intereſts. The atheiſt is inexcuſable who tries to gain over a believer, becauſe he does not propoſe to do himſelf or believer any good by ſuch a converſion.

The proſpect of a future ſtate is the ſecret comfort and refreſhment of my ſoul. It is that which makes nature look gay about me; it doubles all my pleaſures, and ſupports me under all my afflictions. I can look at diſappointments and misfortunes, pain and ſickneſs, death itſelf with indifference, ſo long as I keep in view the pleaſures of eternity, and the ſtate of being in which there will be no fears nor apprehenſions, pains, nor ſorrows. Why will

will any man be ſo impertinently officious, as to tell me all this is only fancy and deluſion? Is there any merit in being the meſſenger of ill news? If it is a dream, let me enjoy it, ſince it makes me both the happier and the better man.

I confeſs, ſays Mr. Addiſon, I do not know how to truſt a man, who believes neither heaven nor hell, or, in other words, a future ſtate of rewards or puniſhments. Not only natural ſelf-love, but reaſon, directs us to promote our own intereſt above all things. It can never be for the intereſt of a believer to do me any miſchief, becauſe he is ſure, upon the balance of accounts, to find himſelf a loſer by it. On the contrary, if he conſiders his

own welfare in his behaviour towards me, it will lead him to do me all the good he can, and at the ſame time reſtrain him from doing me an injury. An unbeliever does not act like a reaſonable creature, if he favours me contrary to his preſent intereſt, or does not diſtreſs me when it turns to his preſent advantage. Honour and good-nature may indeed tie up his hands; but as theſe would be very much ſtrengthened by reaſon and principle, ſo without them they are only inſtincts, or wavering unſettled notions, which reſt on no foundation.

Such are the excellent arguments of Mr. Addiſon on this ſubject, and he obſerves farther, that—" Infidelity has been attacked with ſo good ſucceſs of late

late years, that it is driven out of all its out-works. The atheiſt has not found his poſt tenable, and is therefore retired into Deiſm, and a diſbelief of revealed religion only. But the truth of it is, the greateſt number of this ſet of men are thoſe, who, for want of a virtuous education, or examining the grounds of religion, know ſo very little of the matter in queſtion, that their infidelity is but another term for their ignorance. As folly and inconſiderateneſs are the foundations of infidelity, the great pillars and ſupports of it are, either a vanity of appearing wiſer than the reſt of mankind, or an oſtentation of courage in deſpiſing the terrors of another world, which have ſo great an influence on what, they call,

weaker minds; or an averſion to a belief that muſt cut them off from many of thoſe pleaſures they propoſe to themſelves, and fill them with remorſe for many of thoſe they have already taſted.

The great received articles of the Chriſtian religion, as Mr. Addiſon juſtly argues, have been ſo clearly proved from the authority of that divine Revelation, in which they are delivered, that it is impoſſible for thoſe 'who have ears to hear and eyes to ſee,' not to be convinced of them. But were it poſſible, for any thing in the Chriſtian faith to be erroneous, I can find no ill conſequences in adhering to it. The great points of the incarnation

carnation and ſufferings of our Saviour, produce naturally ſuch habits of virtue in the mind of man, that I ſay, ſuppoſing it were poſſible for us to be miſtaken in them, the Infidel himſelf muſt at leaſt allow that no other ſyſtem of religion could ſo effectually contribute to the heightening of morality. They give us great ideas of the dignity of human nature, and of the love which the Supreme Being bears to his creatures; and conſequently engage us in the higheſt acts of duty towards our Creator, our neighbour and ourſelves.

How many noble arguments has St. Paul raiſed from the chief articles of our Religion, for the advancing of morality in its three great branches?

To give a ſingle example in each kind: What can be a ſtronger motive to a firm truſt and reliance on the mercies of our Maker, than the giving us his Son to ſuffer for us? What can make us love and eſteem the moſt inconſiderable of mankind, more than the thought that Chriſt died for him? Or what diſpoſe us to ſet a ſtricter guard upon the purity of our own hearts, than our being members of Chriſt, and a part of the ſociety of which that immaculate perſon is the head? But theſe are only a Specimen of thoſe admirable enforcements of morality, which the apoſtle has drawn from the hiſtory of our bleſſed Saviour.

If (Mr. Adddiſon ſays) our modern Infidels conſidered theſe matters with

with that candour and ſerioufneſs which they deſerve, we ſhould not ſee them act with ſuch a ſpirit of bitterneſs, arrogance and malice. They would not be raiſing ſuch inſignificant cavils, doubts, and ſcruples, as may be ſtarted againſt every thing that is not capable of mathematical demonſtration; in order to unſettle the minds of the ignorant, diſturb the public peace, ſubvert morality and throw all things into confuſion and diſorder. If none of theſe reflections can have any influence on them, there is one that perhaps may, becauſe it is adapted to their VANITY, by which they ſeem to be guided much more than their reaſon. I would therefore have them conſider that the wiſeſt and beſt of men, in all ages

ages of the world, have been thoſe who lived up to the religion of their Country, when they ſaw nothing in it, oppoſite to morality, and to the beſt lights they had of the Divine Nature.

SECTION VI.

ROBERT NELSON, Eſq. author of "the Practice of True Devotion—The Companion to the Faſts and Feſtivals,—and The Addreſs to Perſons of Quality" was born in London, educated at St. Paul's School, and afterwards admitted a Fellow-Commoner at Trinity-College Cambridge. He died at the age of 58 in the year 1714.

It is yet remembered of the learned and pious Nelſon (ſays the Author of the Adventurer) that he was remarkably elegant in his manners and ſplendid in his dreſs. He knew that the eminence

eminence of his character drew many eyes about him; and he was careful not to drive the young or the gay away from Religion, by repreſenting it as an enemy to any diſtinction or enjoyment in which human nature may innocently delight." Of Mr. Nelſon's "Religious Sentiments" we cannot have better information than from his writings. In his treatiſe "On the Nature and Wiſdom of True Devotion" he ſays —"There are too many in all communions that place all their devotion in the means of religion: provided they pray, hear ſermons, and ſometimes receive the holy communion, they conclude "the man of God made perfect;" they think nothing more neceſſary to entitle them to the favour of the Almighty: or if they are ſenſible, they fall

fall ſhort of their duty in other particulars; yet they flatter themſelves, that their exactneſs in the external parts of religion, will make amends for all ſuch defects. Whereas, in truth, the deſign of all thoſe means of grace which God has eſtabliſhed in Chriſtianity, was to conduct us to ſolid and ſubſtantial piety; to plant in our minds the love and fear of God, and an utter abhorrence of every thing that is evil; to make us juſt and upright in all our dealings with our neighbour, temperate in all our enjoyments, charitable towards the needy and afflicted, and zealous for the ſalvation of our brethren: and, farther, ſo to ſpiritualize our affections, that they might be raiſed above the trifling concerns of this periſhing life, and fixed upon a good

that

that is everlaſting and immutable; ſo that if we do not uſe them to this end and purpoſe, they will no ways be acceptable in God's ſight, but rather provoke his wrath and indignation againſt us, and increaſe our condemnation, in that we pervert the very means of our recovery.

To pray frequently, to read and hear the holy word of God, to receive the bleſſed ſacrament; to faſt, to examine ourſelves, to meditate upon divine ſubjects, are all holy and Chriſtian actions, what God requires from us; and therefore, without doubt, the performance of them, as they are fit to promote our ſalvation, ſo they tend to his honour and glory; but yet, if this were the only path that leadeth to eternal

eternal life, there would not be ſo few that find it.

God expects that we ſhould become new creatures; that the prevailing temper and bent of our ſouls ſhould be to bring forth all the fruits of righteouſneſs; that we ſhould ſacrifice to him our darling paſſions and inclinations, and whatſoever oppoſeth his divine will. The victim we ſhould offer, ſhould be the idol of our heart; that which corrupt nature moſt inclines to, that which bad cuſtom confirms and nouriſhes in us."

From hence it appears that true devotion is not ſo properly a particular virtue as it is the way and manner of performing all the inſtances of our duty;

and that it conſiſts in a conſtant and ready chearfulneſs of mind 'to do the will of God,' however manifeſted to us. It is an earneſtneſs of ſoul to be conformed in every thing to the divine pleaſure; ſo that the covetous do not more eagerly long for wealth, the ambitious for honour, and the epicure for pleaſure, than the devout ſoul does to be 'righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs *.'

This truly religious temper of mind, which we call devotion, will put us upon inquiring into all the particulars of our duty which we owe both to God and man. The natural language of ſuch a ſoul will be 'Lord,

* Luke i. 6.

what

what wouldeſt thou have me to do?—Let me be but acquainted with thy will, and I am ready to obey it.'

In theſe extracts from his works we have a true picture of the author's mind and religious ſentiments; the following lines, prefixed to his "Practice of True Devotion," and written after his death, are a juſt eulogium on his character:

"Once in an age HEAVEN ſuch a *pattern* lends,
Its foes to ſilence, and ſupport its friends.
What virtue did his ſhining worth complete!
Generous, not proud; without ambition, great:
To others mild, as to himſelf ſevere;
Poliſh'd, tho' learn'd; obliging, yet ſincere.
Juſtly, with admiration, ſeen and read;
For all muſt own the Chriſtian was well bred.
His goodneſs ſuch as if no native taint
Had reach'd his ſoul,—as he were born a ſaint.

Diffuſing round an unaffected ſmile,
Calm as his ſpeech, and even as his ſtyle:
His ſtyle as logic cloſe, and ſweet as ſong;
Tho' ſhort, yet full; tho' plain and eaſy, ſtrong.
The writer moſt, but all the man eſteem—
For few could write, and fewer live like him."

SECTION

SECTION VII.

GEORGE, LORD LYTTLETON, is ſo well known to the public as an hiſtorian and a man of letters, that it will not be neceſſary to bring any other teſtimony of his learning and knowledge. His "religious ſentiments" have been ſo eminently diſplayed in his "Treatiſe on the Converſion of St. Paul," that this alone will evince him to have been a true believer in the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

"Beſides all the proofs of it," ſays he, "which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, from

the neceſſary connection it has with the whole ſyſtem of the Jewiſh religion, from the miracles of Chriſt, and from the evidence given of his reſurrection by all the other apoſtles; the converſion and apoſtleſhip of St. PAUL alone, duly conſidered, was of itſelf a demonſtration ſufficient to prove Chriſtianity to be a divine Revelation.

The extraordinary circumſtances attending this converſion of the apoſtle St. Paul are conſidered in every point of view. That a perſon who avowed himſelf to have been "a Phariſee, after the ſtricteſt ſect of his religion," and to have been a violent perſecutor of the Chriſtians, ſhould have at once become a convert to Chriſtianity, is

one of the moſt remarkable incidents in the Hiſtory of the Church. But let us attend to Lord Lyttelton's arguments on this ſubject.

In all theſe ſeverities againſt the Chriſtians St. Paul concurred, being himſelf a Phariſee, 'bred up at the feet of Gameliel,' one of the chief of that ſect. Nor was he content, in the heat of his zeal, with perſecuting the Chriſtians who were at Jeruſalem, but, 'breathing out threatening and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord, went unto the high prieſt, and deſired of him letters to Damaſcus to the ſynagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jeruſalem.' His requeſt was complied with, and he went to Damaſcus with

authority and commiſſion from the high prieſt.

At this inſtant of time, and under theſe circumſtances, did Paul become a diſciple of CHRIST. What could be his motive to take ſuch a part? Was it the hope of increaſing his wealth? The certain conſequences of his taking that part was not only the loſs of all he had, but of all the hopes of acquiring more. Thoſe whom he left were the diſpoſers of wealth, power, and dignity, in Judea. Thoſe whom he went to were indigent men, oppreſſed, kept down from all the means of improving their fortunes. They among them, who had more than the reſt, ſhared what they had with their brethren; but with this aſſiſtance the whole community was hardly ſupplied with the neceſſaries of life.

life. And even in churches he afterwards planted himſelf, which were much more wealthy than that of Jeruſalem; ſo far was St. Paul from availing himſelf of their charity, or the veneration they had for him, in order to draw that wealth to himſelf, that he often refuſed to take any part of it for the neceſſaries of life.

As to credit or reputation, that too lay all on the ſide he forſook. The ſect he embraced was under the greateſt and moſt univerſal contempt of any then in the world. The chiefs and leaders of it were men of the loweſt birth, education, and rank. They had no one advantage of parts or learning, or other human endowments, to recommend them. The doctrines they taught

taught were contrary to thoſe which they who were accounted the wiſeſt and moſt knowing of their nation, profeſſed. The very Author and Head of their faith had been condemned as a criminal and died on the croſs. Could the diſciple of Gameliel think he ſhould gain any credit or reputation by becoming a teacher in a college of fiſhermen? could he flatter himſelf, that, either in or out of Judea, the doctrines he taught could do him any honour? No! He knew very well that the "preaching Chriſt crucified, was a ſtumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs."

So far was St. Paul from taking any advantage of a higher education, ſuperior learning, and more uſe of the world,

world, to claim to himſelf any ſupremacy above the other apoſtles, that he made light of all thoſe attainments, and declared that he came not with excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom, but determined to know nothing, among thoſe he converted, "ſave* Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified." And the reaſon he gave for it was, "that their faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of GOD."

If, as Lord Lyttelton obſerves, St. Paul had nothing to gain by taking this part, let us conſider, on the other hand, what he gave up, and what he had reaſon to fear. He gave up a fortune which he was then in a fair way of advancing: he gave up that repu-

* 1 Cor. 2.

tation

tation which he had acquired by the labours and ſtudies of his whole life, and by a behaviour which had been "blameleſs, touching the righteouſneſs which is in the law;" Philip. 3. 6: he gave up his friends, his relations, and family; from whom he eſtranged and baniſhed himſelf for life: he gave up that "religion which he had profited in above many of his equals in his own nation, and thoſe traditions of his fathers which he had been more exceedingly zealous of." Gal. i. 14.

How hard this ſacrifice was to a man of his warm temper, and above all men to a Jew, is worth conſideration. That nation is known to have been more tenacious of their religious opinions than any other upon the face of

of the earth. The ſtricteſt and proudeſt ſect among them was that of the Phariſees, under whoſe diſcipline St. Paul was bred. The departing therefore ſo ſuddenly from their favourite tenets, renouncing their pride, and from their diſciple becoming their adverſary, was a moſt difficult effort for one to make ſo nurſed up in the eſteem of them, and whoſe early prejudices were ſo ſtrongly confirmed by all the power of habit, all the authority of example, and all the allurements of honour and intereſt. Theſe were the ſacrifices St. Paul had to make in becoming a Chriſtian.

After conſidering the difficulties and the ſucceſs of St. Paul's miniſtry among the Gentiles, Lord Lyttelton ſays

ſays—"From all this I think it may be concluded that no human means employed by St. Paul, in his deſign of converting the Gentiles, were or could be adequate to the great difficulties he had to contend with, or to the ſucceſs that we know attended his work; and we can in reaſon aſcribe that ſucceſs to no other cauſe but the power of GOD going along with and aiding his miniſtry, becauſe no other was equal to the effect: and then it follows that what he related to have been the cauſe of his converſion, and to have happened in conſequence of it, did all really happen; THEREFORE, THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS A DIVINE REVELATION."

SECTION

SECTION VII.

PART II.

THAT the preceding concluſion is fairly and undeniably drawn from the premiſes, I think, Lord Lyttelton ſays, muſt be owned, unleſs ſome probable cauſe can be aſſigned, to account for thoſe facts ſo authentically related in the acts of the Apoſtles, and atteſted in his epiſtles by St. Paul himſelf, other than any of thoſe which I have conſidered. It muſt be therefore accounted for by the power of God. That God ſhould work miracles for the eſtabliſhment of a moſt holy religion, which, from the inſeparable difficulties

that

that ſtood in the way of it, could not have eſtabliſhed itſelf without ſuch an aſſiſtance, is no way repugnant to human reaſon. But that, without any miracle, ſuch things ſhould have happened, as no adequate natural cauſes can be aſſigned for, is what human reaſon cannot believe.

Upon what grounds then can we reject the unqueſtionable teſtimony given by St. Paul, that he was called by God to be a diſciple and apoſtle of Jesus Christ? Does the doctrine he preached contain any precepts againſt the law of morality, written by God in the hearts of mankind? This is ſo far from being the caſe, that even thoſe who reject Chriſtianity as a divine Revelation, acknowledge the morals delivered

ſivered by CHRIST and by his apoſtles, to be worthy of GOD.

Is it then on account of the myſteries in the goſpel that the facts are denied, though ſupported by evidence, which, in all other caſes, would be allowed to contain the cleareſt conviction, and cannot in this be rejected without reducing the mind to a ſtate of abſolute ſcepticiſm, and overturning thoſe rules by which we judge of all evidence, and of the truth and credibility of all other facts? But this is plainly to give up the uſe of our underſtanding, where we are able to uſe it moſt properly, in order to apply it to things of which it is not a competent judge. The motives and reaſons upon which divine wiſdom may think proper to act, as well as the

manner in which it acts, muſt often lie out of the reach of our underſtanding; but the motives and reaſons of human actions, and the manner in which they are performed, are all in the ſphere of human knowledge, and upon them we may judge, with a well-grounded confidence, when they are fairly propoſed to our conſideration.

It is incomparably more probable, that a revelation from God concerning the ways of his providence, ſhould contain in it matters above the capacity of our minds to comprehend, than that St. Paul, or indeed any of the other apoſtles, ſhould have acted, as we know that they did, upon any other foundations than certain knowledge of CHRIST's being riſen from the dead;

or

or ſhould have ſucceeded in the work they undertook, without the aid of miraculous powers. To the former of theſe propoſitions Lord Lyttelton ſays, "I may give my aſſent without any direct oppoſition of reaſon to faith; but, in admitting the latter, I muſt believe againſt all thoſe probabilities that are the rational grounds of aſſent."

Nor do they who reject the Chriſtian religion, becauſe of the difficulties which occur in its myſteries, conſider how far that objection will go againſt other ſyſtems, both of religion and philoſophy, which they themſelves profeſs to admit. There are in Deiſm itſelf, the moſt ſimple of all religious opinions, ſeveral difficulties, for which human reaſon can but ill account;

which may, therefore, be not improperly ſtyled Articles of Faith. Such is the origin of evil under the government of an all-good and all-powerful God; a queſtion ſo hard, that the inability of ſolving it, in a ſatisfactory manner to their apprehenſions, has driven ſome of the greateſt philoſophers into the monſtrous and ſenſeleſs opinions of Manicheiſm and Atheiſm. Such is reconciling the preſcience of God with the free-will of man, which, after much thought on the ſubject, Mr. Locke fairly confeſſes he could not do, though he acknowledged both; and what Mr. Locke could not do, in reaſoning upon ſubjects of a metaphyſical nature, "I am apt to think," ſays Lord Lyttelton, "few men, if any, can hope to perform."

But

But, becauſe of theſe difficulties, or any other that may occur in the ſyſtem of Deiſm, no wiſe man will deny the being of a God, or his infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, which are proved by ſuch evidence as carries the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt conviction, and cannot be refuſed without involving the mind in far greater difficulties, even in downright abſurdities and impoſſibilities. The only part, therefore, that can be taken is to account, in the beſt manner that our weak reaſon is able to do, for ſuch ſeeming objections; and, where that fails, to acknowledge its weakneſs, and acquieſce under the certainty, that our very imperfect knowledge and judgment cannot be the meaſure of divine wiſdom or the univerſal ſtandard of truth.

So likewiſe it is with reſpect to the CHRISTIAN RELIGION; ſome difficulties occur in that Revelation which human reaſon can hardly clear; but, as the truth of it ſtands upon evidence ſo ſtrong and convincing that it cannot be denied without much greater difficulties than what attend the belief of it, we ought not to reject upon ſuch objections, however mortifying they may be to our pride. That indeed would have all things made plain to us; but God has thought proper to proportion our knowledge to our wants, not our pride. All that concerns our duty is clear; and as to other points, either of natural or revealed religion, if he has left ſome obſcurities in them, is that any reaſonable cauſe of complaint? Not to rejoice in

the benefit of what he has graciouſly allowed us to know, from a preſumptuous diſguſt at our incapacity of knowing more, is as abſurd, Lord Lyttelton obſerves, as it would be to refuſe to walk becauſe we cannot fly.

From the arrogant ignorance of metaphyſical reaſonings aiming at matters above our knowledge, aroſe all the ſpeculative impiety and many of the worſt ſuperſtitions of the old Heathen world, before the goſpel was preached to bring men back again to the primitive faith; and from the ſame ſource have ſince flowed ſome of the greateſt corruptions of the evangelical truth and the moſt inveterate prejudices againſt it: an effect juſt as natural as for our eyes to grow weak and even

blind by being ſtrained to look at objects too diſtant, or not made for them to ſee.

Are then our intellectual faculties of no uſe in religion? Yes, undoubtedly, of the moſt neceſſary uſe, when rightly employed. The proper employment of them is to diſtinguiſh its genuine doctrines from others erroneouſly or corruptly aſcribed to it; to conſider the importance and purport of them, with the connection they bear to one another; but firſt of all, to examine with the ſtricteſt attention the evidence by which religion is proved internal as well as external. If the external evidence be convincingly ſtrong, and there is no internal proof of its falſhood, but much to ſupport and confirm its truth,

then ſurely no difficulties ought to prevent our giving a full aſſent and belief to it. It is our duty indeed to endeavour to find the beſt ſolutions we can to them; but when no ſatisfactory ones are to be found, it is no leſs our duty to acquieſce with humility, and believe that to be right, which we know is above us, and belonging to a wiſdom ſuperior to ours.

Nor let it be ſaid, that this will be an argument for the admitting all doctrines, however abſurd, that may have been grafted upon the Chriſtian faith. Thoſe whieh can be plainly proved not to belong to it, fall not under the reaſoning I have laid down, Lord Lyttelton ſays; and certainly none do belong to it which contradict either our clear intuitive knowledge or the evident principles

principles and dictates of reaſon. I ſpeak only of difficulties which attend the belief of the goſpel in ſome of its pure and eſſential doctrines, plainly and evidently delivered there; which, being made known to us by a revelation, ſupported by proofs, that our reaſon ought to admit, and not being ſuch things as it can certainly know to be falſe, muſt be received by it as objects of faith; though they are ſuch as it could not have diſcovered by any natural means, and ſuch as are difficult to be conceived, or ſatisfactorily explained, by its limited powers.

If the glorious light of the goſpel be ſometimes overcaſt with clouds of doubt, ſo is the light of our reaſon too. But ſhall we deprive ourſelves of the advantage of either, becauſe thoſe clouds cannot

cannot perhaps be entirely removed, while we remain in this mortal life? ſhall we obſtinately and frowardly ſhut our eyes againſt "that day-ſpring from on high that has viſited us", becauſe we are not yet able to bear the full blaze of his beams? Indeed, not even in heaven itſelf, not in the higheſt ſtate of perfection to which a finite being can ever attain, will all the counſels of Providence, all the height and the depth of the infinite wiſdom of God, be ever diſcloſed or underſtood. Faith even then will be neceſſary; and there will be myſteries which cannot be penetrated by the moſt exalted archangel, and truths which cannot be known by him otherwiſe than from Revelation, or believed upon any other ground of aſſent than a ſubmiſſive confidence in the divine wiſdom. What

then,

then, ſhall man preſume that his weak and narrow underſtanding is ſufficient to guide him into all truth, without any kind of faith or revelation? Shall he complain that "the ways of God are not like his ways, and paſt his finding out? True philoſophy, as well as true Chriſtianity, Lord Lyttelton obſerves, would teach us a wiſer and modeſter part. It would teach to be content within thoſe bounds which GOD has aſſigned to MAN—"caſting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of GOD, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of CHRIST." 2 Cor. x. 5.

SECTION VIII.

GILBERT WEST, Eſq. to whom Lord Lyttelton addreſſed his letter on the converſion of St. Paul, was the author of the "Obſervations on the Hiſtory and Evidences of the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt." This work has very deſervedly met with a moſt favourable reception from the public, having gone through ſeveral editions. In the preface to this book, the author ſays as follows—

"The following obſervations were begun with the ſingle view of obtaining ſatisfaction for myſelf upon ſome difficulties

difficulties in the evangelical hiſtory of the reſurrection; and they are now publiſhed with the hopes of their being as uſeful to others as they have been to me. This is the chief, if not the ſole end, that a Layman can reaſonably propoſe to himſelf, in publiſhing any thing upon a ſubject of this nature. "For I am not ignorant, ſays Mr. Weſt, how little reputation is to be gained by writing on the ſide of Chriſtianity, which by many people is regarded as a ſuperſtitious fable not worth the thoughts of a wiſe man; and conſidered by more as a mere political ſcheme, calculated to ſerve the power and intereſt of the Clergy only."

How abſolutely groundleſs both theſe opinions are, will eaſily appear to

any

any one, as Mr. Weſt obſerves, who will take the pains to examine fairly and impartially the proofs and doctrines of the Chriſtian religion; proofs eſtabliſhed upon facts, the ſureſt foundation of evidence; and doctrines derived by inſpiration, from the great Author of reaſon and Father of all mankind.

Whoever hath either neglected or doth refuſe to make this examination, can have no right to paſs his judgment upon Chriſtianity; and ſhould, methinks, for the ſame reaſon, be ſomewhat cautious of cenſuring thoſe, who acknowledge it to be of divine inſtitution, eſpecially as he will find in the liſt of Chriſtians, the great and venerable names of BACON, MILTON, BOYLE, LOCKE,

LOCKE, and NEWTON; names to whoſe authority every thing ſhould ſubmit but truth, to whom they themſelves thought it not beneath their ſuperior talents to ſubmit, though ſhe required them to believe in CHRIST.

But it may poſſibly be demanded, why, being a Layman, I preſume to intermeddle in a province commonly thought to belong peculiarly to the Clergy? To which I anſwer, that, beſides the motives above ſuggeſted, this very prejudice was a powerful inducement to me to publiſh the following obſervations, and to prefix my name to them.

The Clergy, I am ſenſible, Mr. Weſt ſays, are both ready and able to maintain

tain the cauſe of Chriſtianity, as their many excellent writings in defence of it ſufficiently demonſtrate; but as the generality of mankind is more governed by prejudice than reaſon, the writings of the Clergy are not ſo univerſally read or ſo candidly received as they deſerve, becauſe they are ſuppoſed to proceed, not from conſcience and conviction, but from intereſted views, and the common cauſe of their profeſſion. A ſuppoſition evidently as partial and injurious as that would be, Mr. Weſt remarks, which ſhould impute the gallant behaviour of our Officers to the mean conſideration of their pay, and their hopes of preferment, excluſive of all the nobler motives of gentlemen, viz. the ſenſe of honour, and the love of their country.

But the Clergy, I dare ſay, who, if there be any thing beſides prejudice in the above-mentioned imputation upon them, have alone the right to make this demand, will readily excuſe my appearing, ſays Mr. Weſt, in the cauſe of Chriſtianity; and the Laity, I hope, ſuch of them, at leaſt, as are Chriſtians not in name and profeſſion only, will join with me in declaring, againſt the vain prejudices of unbelievers, that the Chriſtian religion is of the utmoſt importance to all orders and degrees of men; and that the greateſt ſervice that the moſt zealous patriot can do his country, is to promote the faith, and thereby encourage the practice, of the truly divine virtues recommended by CHRIST and his Apoſtles."

SECTION

SECTION IX.

SOAME JENYNS, Eſq. member of parliament for Cambridge, is well known to the public as a man of talents and literature. Among his ſeveral compoſitions now publiſhed, in four volumes, the works which moſt excited the public attention were, his "Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil,"—and "A View of the Internal Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion."

The former, viz. his "Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil," was attacked with great acrimony, much abuſe, and no ſmall portion of calumny,—as his friend and biographer, Mr. Nalſon Cole, obſerves,

in a ſenſible preface to a new edition of his works. But the author, convinced that he had been much miſunderſtood by thoſe who had written againſt him, after having done all in his power to remove their miſapprehenſion and aſſiſt their underſtanding, leſt he might not have ſucceeded in that attempt, he makes the ſincereſt, the cleareſt, and the moſt liberal, declaration of the end propoſed by him in writing that Treatiſe, in the following words:

" That his intentions were to reconcile the numerous evils ſo conſpicuous in the creation, with the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, of the Creator; to ſhew that no more of them are admitted by him than are neceſſary towards promoting univerſal good; and from thence to perſuade men to an entire

entire reſignation to his all-wiſe, but incomprehenſible, diſpenſations.

" To aſcertain the nature of virtue, and enforce the practice of it; to prove the certainty of a future ſtate, and the juſtice of the rewards and puniſhments that will attend it; to recommend ſubmiſſion to national governments, and conformity to national religions, notwithſtanding the evils and defects which muſt unavoidably adhere to them; and, laſtly, to ſhew the excellence and credibility of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION, to reconcile ſome of its moſt abſtruſe doctrines with reaſon, and to anſwer all thoſe objections to its authority which have been drawn from its imperfections and abuſes. Theſe, and theſe only, were his intentions."

Such was the author's ſolemn declaration reſpecting this work. In the year 1776 he publiſhed his "View of the Internal Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion;" the reception it met with, Mr. Cole obſerves, was ſuch as ſeldom is ſhewn to the compoſitions of the moſt approved writers. It was written under a full conviction of the truth of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, and a ſincere zeal for its ſervice.

The few following pages, at the concluſion of this valuable treatiſe, are extracted, in order to give thoſe, who have not peruſed it, an idea of the author's "religious ſentiments:"——"Many have objected to the whole ſcheme of the Chriſtian Revelation, as partial, fluctuating, and indeterminate, unjuſt, and unworthy of an omniſcient

niſcient and omnipotent Author, who cannot be ſuppoſed to have favoured particular perſons, countries, and times, with this divine communication, while others, no leſs meritorious, have been altogether excluded from its benefits, nor to have changed and counteracted his own deſigns; that is, to have formed mankind able and diſpoſed to render themſelves miſerable by their own wickedneſs, and then to have contrived ſo ſtrange an expedient to reſtore them to that happineſs which they need never have been permitted to forfeit; and this to have been brought about by the unneceſſary interpoſition of a Mediator.

" To all this I ſhall only reply," Mr. Jenyns ſays, " that, however un-

accountable this may appear to us, who ſee but as ſmall a part of the Chriſtian as of the univerſal plan of Creation, they are both, in regard to all theſe circumſtances, exactly analogous to each other. In all the diſpenſations of Providence with which we are acquainted, benefits are diſtributed in a ſimilar manner; health and ſtrength, ſenſe and ſcience, wealth and power, are all beſtowed on individuals and communities in different degrees, and at different times. The whole economy of this world conſiſts of evils and remedies; and theſe, for the moſt part, adminiſtered by the inſtrumentality of intermediate agents. God has permitted us to plunge ourſelves into poverty, diſtreſs, and miſery, by our own vices; and has afforded us the advice,

inſtructions,

inſtructions, and examples, of others to deter or extricate us from theſe calamities. He has formed us ſubject to innumerable diſeaſes, and he has beſtowed on us a variety of remedies. He has made us liable to hunger, thirſt, and nakedneſs; and he ſupplies us with food, drink, and clothing, uſually by the adminiſtration of others. He has created poiſons, and he has provided antidotes. He has ordained the winter's cold to cure the peſtilential heats of ſummer, and the ſummer's ſunſhine to dry up the inundations of the winter.

Why the conſtitution of nature is ſo formed, why all the viſible diſpenſations of Providence are ſuch, and why ſuch is the Chriſtian diſpenſation alſo, we

we know not, nor have faculties to comprehend. God might certainly have made the material world a ſyſtem of perfect beauty and regularity, without evils, and without remedies; and the Chriſtian diſpenſation, a ſcheme only of moral virtue, productive of happineſs, without the intervention of any atonement or mediation. He might have exempted our bodies from all diſeaſes, and our minds from all depravity; and we ſhould then have ſtood in no need of medicines to reſtore us to health, or expedients to reconcile us to his favour. It ſeems, indeed, to our ignorance, that this would have been more conſiſtent with juſtice and reaſon; but his infinite wiſdom has decided in another manner, and formed the ſyſtems both of nature

nature and Chriſtianity on other principles; and theſe ſo exactly ſimilar, that we have cauſe to conclude that they both muſt proceed from the ſame ſource of divine power and wiſdom, however inconſiſtent with our reaſon they may appear.

Reaſon is, undoubtedly, our ſureſt guide in all matters which lie within the narrow circle of her intelligence. On the ſubject of Revelation her province is only to examine into its authority; and when that is once proved, ſhe has no more to do but to acquieſce in its doctrines; and, therefore, is never ſo ill employed as when ſhe pretends to accommodate them to her own ideas of rectitude and truth. God, ſays this ſelf-ſufficient teacher, is perfectly wiſe,

wiſe, juſt, and good; and what is the inference? That all his diſpenſations muſt be conformable to our notions of perfect wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs. But it ſhould firſt be proved that Man is perfect, and as wiſe as his Creator, or this conſequence will not follow; but rather the reverſe, that is, that the diſpenſations of a perfect and all-wiſe Being muſt probably appear unreaſonable, and, perhaps, unjuſt to a being imperfect and ignorant; and, therefore, their ſeeming impoſſibility may be a mark of their truth, and, in ſome meaſure, juſtify that pious rant of a mad enthuſiaſt:

"Credo, quia impoſſibile."

Nor is it the leaſt ſurpriſing that we are not able to underſtand the ſpiritual

ritual diſpenſations of the Almighty, when his material works are to us no leſs incomprehenſible. Our reaſon can afford us no inſight into theſe great properties of matter, gravitation, attraction, elaſticity and electricity, nor even into the eſſence of matter itſelf. Can reaſon teach us how the ſun's luminous orb can fill a circle, whoſe diameter contains many millions of miles with a conſtant inundation of ſucceſſive rays, during thouſands of years without any perceivable diminution of that body, from whence they are continually poured, or any augmentation of thoſe bodies on which they fall, and by which they are conſtantly abſorbed? Can reaſon tell us how thoſe rays, darted with a velocity greater than that of a cannon-ball, can

ſtrike

ſtrike the tendereſt organs of the human frame without inflicting any degree of pain, or by what means this percuſſion only can convey the forms of diſtant objects to an immaterial mind? or how any union can be formed between material and immaterial eſſences, or how the wounds of the body can give pain to the ſoul, or the anxieties of the ſoul can emaciate and deſtroy the body?

That all theſe things are ſo, we have viſible and indiſputable demonſtration; but how they can be ſo, is to us as incomprehenſible as the moſt abſtruſe myſteries of Revelation can poſſibly be. In ſhort, we ſee ſo ſmall a part of the great whole; we know ſo little of the relation which the preſent life bears to pre-exiſtent

pre-exiſtent and future ſtates;—we can conceive ſo little of the nature of God and his attributes, or mode of exiſtence;—we can comprehend ſo little of the material, and ſo much leſs of the moral plan on which the univerſe is conſtituted, or on what principle it proceeds, that if a revelation from ſuch a Being, on ſuch ſubjects, was in every part familiar to our underſtandings and conſonant to our reaſon, we ſhould have great cauſe to ſuſpect its divine authority; and therefore, had this revelation been leſs incomprehenſible, it would certainly have been more incredible.

"But I ſhall not enter farther," ſays the author, "into the conſideration of theſe abſtruſe and difficult ſpeculations,

becauſe the diſcuſſion of them would render this ſhort Eſſay too tedious and laborious a taſk for the peruſal of them, for whom it was principally intended; which are all thoſe buſy or idle perſons, whoſe time and thoughts are wholly engroſſed by the purſuits of buſineſs or pleaſure, ambition or luxury. Who know nothing of this religion, except what they have accidentally picked up by deſultory converſation or ſuperficial reading; and have thence determined with themſelves, 'that a pretended revelation, founded on ſo ſtrange and improbable a ſtory, ſo contradictory to reaſon, ſo adverſe to the world and all its occupations, ſo incredible in its doctrines, and in its precepts ſo impracticable, can be nothing more than the impoſition of prieſt-

craft

craft upon ignorant and illiterate ages, and artfully continued, as an engine well adapted to awe and govern the ſuperſtitious vulgar.

To talk to ſuch about the Chriſtian religion, is to converſe with the deaf concerning muſic, or with the blind on the beauties of painting. They want all ideas relative to the ſubject, and therefore can never be made to comprehend it. To enable them to do this, their minds muſt be formed for theſe conceptions by contemplation, retirement, and abſtraction from buſineſs and diſſipation, by ill-health, diſappointments, and diſtreſſes; and poſſibly by divine interpoſition, or by enthuſiaſm, which is uſually miſtaken for it.

Without ſome of theſe preparatory aids, together with a competent degree of learning and application, it is impoſſible that they can think or know, underſtand or believe, any thing about it. If they profeſs to believe, they deceive others; if they fancy that they believe, they deceive themſelves.

I am ready to acknowledge," ſays Mr. Jenyns, " that theſe gentlemen, as far as their information reaches, are perfectly right; and if they are endued with good underſtanding, which have been entirely devoted to the buſineſs or amuſements of the world, they can paſs no other judgment, and muſt revolt from the hiſtory and doctrines of this religion." ' The preaching of Chriſt crucified was to the Jews a ſtumbling-

block and to the Greeks foolishness; and so it must appear to all, who, like them, judge from established prejudices, false learning, and superficial knowledge; for those who are quite unable to follow the chain of its prophesy, to see the beauty and justness of its moral precepts, and to enter into the wonders of its dispensations, can form no other idea of this revelation but that of a confused rhapsody of fictions and absurdities.

If it is asked, Was Christianity then intended only for learned divines and profound philosophers? I answer, no: it was at first preached by the illiterate, and received by the ignorant; and to such are the practical, which are the most necessary, parts of it sufficiently

intelligible. But the proofs of its authority undoubtedly are not, becauſe theſe muſt be chiefly drawn from other parts, of a ſpeculative nature, opening to our inquiries inexhauſtible diſcoveries concerning the nature, attributes, and diſpenſations, of God, which cannot be underſtood without ſome learning and much attention. From theſe the generality of mankind muſt neceſſarily be excluded, and muſt therefore truſt to others for the grounds of their belief, if they believe at all.

Hence perhaps it is that faith, or eaſineſs of belief, is frequently and ſo ſtrongly recommended in the Goſpel; becauſe, if men require proofs of which they themſelves are incapable, and

thoſe

thoſe who have no knowledge on this important ſubject, will not place ſome confidence in thoſe who have, the illiterate and inattentive muſt ever continue in a ſtate of unbelief. But then all ſuch ſhould remember that, in all ſciences, even in mathematicks themſelves, there are many propoſitions which, on a curſory view, appear to the moſt acute underſtanding, uninſtructed in that ſcience, to be impoſſible, which yet, on a cloſer examination, are found to be truths capable of the ſtricteſt demonſtration; and that therefore, in diſquiſitions on which we cannot determine without much learned inveſtigation, reaſon, uninformed, is by no means to be depended on.

Hence they ought ſurely to conclude that it may be at leaſt as poſſible for them to be miſtaken, in diſbelieving

this Revelation who know nothing of the matter, as for theſe great maſters of reaſon and erudition, GROTIUS, BACON, NEWTON, BOYLE, LOCKE, ADDISON, and LYTTLETON, to be deceived in their belief—a belief to which they firmly adhered after the moſt diligent and learned reſearches into the authenticity of its records, the completion of the prophecies, the ſublimity of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, and the arguments of its adverſaries. A belief which they have teſtified to the world, by their writings, without any other motive than their regard for truth and the benefit of mankind.

Should the few foregoing pages, ſays the author, add but one mite to the treaſures with which theſe learned writers

writers have enriched the world; if they ſhould be ſo fortunate as to perſuade any of theſe minute philoſophers to place ſome confidence in theſe great opinions, and to diſtruſt their own; if they ſhould be able to convince them that, notwithſtanding all unfavourable appearances, Chriſtianity may not be altogether artifice and error; if they ſhould prevail on them to examine it with ſome attention; or, if that is too much trouble, not to reject it without any examination at all; the purpoſe of this little work will be ſufficiently anſwered.

Had the arguments herein uſed, and the new hints here flung out, been more largely diſcuſſed, it might eaſily have been extended to a more conſiderable bulk; but then the buſy would

not have had leiſure, nor the idle inclination, to have read it. Should it ever have the honour to be admitted into ſuch good company, they will immediately determine that it muſt be the work of ſome enthuſiaſt or methodiſt, ſome beggar, or ſome madman.

I ſhall therefore, ſays Mr. Jenyns, beg leave to aſſure them that the author is very far removed from all theſe characters; that he once perhaps believed as little as themſelves; but having ſome leiſure, and more curioſity, he employed them both in reſolving a queſtion which ſeemed to him of ſome importance.

Whether Chriſtianity was really an impoſture, founded on an abſurd, incredible, and obſolete fable, as many ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe it; or whether it is, what it pretends to be, a Revelation communicated to mankind by the interpoſition of ſupernatural power? On a candid inquiry, he ſoon found that the firſt was an abſolute impoſſibility, and that its pretenſions to the latter were founded on the moſt ſolid grounds.

In the further purſuit of this examination he perceived, at every ſtep, new light ariſing, and ſome of the brighteſt from parts of it the moſt obſcure, but productive of the cleareſt proofs, becauſe equally beyond the power of human artifice to invent, and human reaſon to diſcover.

Theſe arguments, which have convinced him of the divine origin of this religion

religion, he has here put together in as clear and conciſe a manner as he was able, thinking they might have the ſame effect upon others; and being of opinion that, if there were a few more true Chriſtians in the world, it would be beneficial to themſelves, and by no means detrimental to the public."

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

As the preceding pages contain the "religious ſentiments" of the greateſt philoſophers, and of men the moſt eminent for their learning and knowledge that this or any other country has produced, it will be difficult to add any thing to the weight of ſuch authority *.

Though,

* As it was the profeſſed deſign of this publication to repreſent only the "religious ſentiments of learned and eminent Laymen," but little more is added. It is devoutly to be wiſhed that ſuch great authorities on the ſide of Chriſtianity may, in ſome meaſure, counteract the effect of thoſe impious principles promulgated by the diſciples of that "wicked wit" VOLTAIRE, who ſo artfully diſſeminate the weeds

Though, as it has already been obſerved, we do not mean to reſt the truth of the Chriſtian religion on human authority only, yet the teſtimony of ſo many eminent Laymen may have ſome influence on thoſe who will pay no regard to the repreſentations of the Clergy.

After all, we may ſay, in the language of Abraham to the rich man in the goſpel, "If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead." In the ſame manner, if our

weeds of INFIDELITY among the flowers of HISTORY. Of ſuch we may truly ſay, in the words of Milton—

"You have brought ſcandal to Iſrael,
Diffidence of God, and doubt in feeble hearts,
Propenſe enough before to waver."

modern

modern ſceptics will not be perſuaded of the truth of the Chriſtian religion by its internal evidence, the example of its Author, the excellence of its precepts, and the purity of its doctrine, confirmed by ſo many external "ſigns and wonders," it is to be feared that the united arguments of the Clergy and Laity will avail but little, and they will ſtill continue in the ſituation of thoſe whom our bleſſed Lord "upbraided with their unbelief and hardneſs of heart *."

* Mark xvi. 14.

THE END.